We have in hand, as we have already intimated, and hope to commence next week, the publication of an ALPHABETICAL DIGEST *of the whole of the contents of the* NEW BUILDING ACT. *This will be in minuteness far beyond those hitherto issued. The great public attention which this statute has excited is proved by the fact of the whole of a large extra edition of the number of* THE BUILDER *containing the Act being entirely sold. It is our intention to publish almost immediately the whole of the Building Act, with Mr. Bartholomew's Digest, in a pocket form, much smaller and more portable than any hitherto published.*

The Builder.

NO. LXXXIV.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1844.

COMPETITION in architectural design, like that of competition in operative building, is a subject which has so often occupied both public and professional attention, that we need no apology for saying a few words upon it. We are indeed led to do so upon the present occasion by the following advertisement:—

"TO ARCHITECTS.—It has been resolved to build a new Church for the united parishes of St. Thomas and St. Clement, Winchester. Architects are invited to send in Plans, Elevations, Sections, &c., on or before October 10, 1844, for a plain and substantial Church, to hold about 1,000 persons on the floor. Cost, independent of the old material, not exceeding 4,000*l*. As the site is peculiar, personal inspection is absolutely necessary, when further information can be obtained from the rector and churchwardens. No remuneration will be given for any plan except that chosen, for which the committee will pay 20*l*."

A PRIZE OF £20 for designing a church to cost 4,000*l*., besides the old materials! with the privilege of a gratis journey to Winchester, and the pleasure of returning, if not more light-hearted, at least more light-pursed.

These men of St. Thomas are truly most clement to the portion of the architectural profession possessed of aspiring genius, and cannot be endued with the incredulity of St. Thomas, or perhaps they would not believe the expense of their advertisement would be returned by any array of talent thence invoked. As far as we remember, not less than two-thirds the cost of the tickets in a state lottery were given in prizes to the adventurers. Now let us calculate this church-lottery. Suppose for a moment only twenty young men, as little "up to snuff" as any young tradeless adventurer, who, gazing at a recruiting bill, smeared with red, blue, and yellow, and headed "Glory," "Promotion," "Victories in Affghanistan," feels his heart tickled to enlist: suppose twenty such raw recruits in architecture take the journey, expend thereon five pounds each, make each a design, work themselves, pay only 5*l*. each for assistance, five shillings for paper and carriage, and three guineas each for landscapes to tickle the speculative eyes of the clement St. Thomasites; and suppose only five of them spend three pounds each more in going to Winchester, to see that all is fair, or to canvass the powers in the business: this will sum up to two hundred and eighty-three pounds, to be clemently expended in that of the utility of which experienced practitioners will have more than the doubt of St. Thomas,—and thus not less than fourteen blanks will turn up to one prize. The public-house "Derby Stakes" are sound, safe, and sacred, compared with this.

But now let us see the probable result of this impudent advertisement. A church is to be built—no doubt the parties advertising have already designs—perhaps they are too expensive; and perhaps two practitioners in the neighbourhood are rivals, and the friends of neither will give way, and they will not join interests and build jointly, or dividing the architect's pay into three, set one apart for expenses, share between them the remainder, and one be virtually the architect. Half the pretences for choosing designs in competition result from the cause just mentioned.

But suppose the advertisement meet, as no doubt it will, the eye of some unlicensed architectural hawker, travelling like a Birmingham agent "in the button line," some representative of the architectural firm of Mufti and "Stratch," or any other victimizers who tout about the country, lying like "Stratch" himself; these twenty-pound-mongers will be sure themselves to be taken in—the old story will as assuredly occur like the Arabian Nights' tale of the ladies, the year of happiness, the over curiosity, and the result. The "plain church" will have a high steeple, rich tracery, profuse work; as usual, under such circumstances, a couple of thousand pounds-worth of work will be directed to be cut out, and, as usual, the actual cost will, after this retrenchment, be a couple of thousand pounds (if not double that) more than the first estimate. Fifty such instances have, we know, occurred. These scoundrels spreading ruin, unhappiness, law, and squabbling wherever their impudence carries them. We know one instance where their four thousand became twelve; another, where their twenty thousand was forty; and we believe these touters never yet completed a business without deceit and trickery;—and so deserve to be dealt with all who encourage such conduct.

But now let us examine the benefit in design and construction resulting from these paltry competitions. Not one of the twenty young men whom we have instanced above should be the man to design and execute a church; all the old churches are designed with the most mature talent—no tyro ever touched one; no man, the extent of whose Free-masonic knowledge lies in an erudite exactness of knack in the sticking of pigs or the slaying of lambs ever ventured of old to determine whether the voids and masses of a church were properly apportioned; none whose technical lore consists in knowing the temperature at which honey and spices may be kept without pecuniary loss ever ventured to say whether window-tracery or mouldings were correctly plotted; nor did any baker, the most learned in the setting of his leven, then ever trouble himself about the exact rise of an arch, or the proper use of roll-mouldings.

No—churches were alone designed by the persons in the world the most learned in architecture, the best constructors, the most experienced, the shrewdest, the wisest economists; the still existing consequence is, the meanest village church outlives, by the art of its construction (however mean and perishable its materials), generations of costly mansions; however simple its architecture, its taste and picturesqueness invite, though it be old and patched, and surface worn, the admiration of the antiquary and the artist. It was made as it is, because those who built it required it to be so. It lasts, because it was put together scientifically; every part useful was made ornamental, and every part ornamental was made useful.

THE NEW HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

SINCE the last notice of this important work which appeared in this journal, very considerable progress has been made in every department, and the whole structure now presents that tangible and substantial appearance which enables the visitor to form a tolerably adequate idea of its magnitude, and of the accommodation it is calculated to afford. In order more distinctly to describe the present state of the works it should be premised that the general design of the whole construction embraces the following main features—1st. The river-front, consisting principally of apartments to be devoted to the use of committees, meetings for conference, &c. 2nd. A parallel and corresponding front, facing the west and fronting the Abbey. 3rd. The clock-tower, situate at the north end of the building, to be appropriated to the residence of the Speaker. 4th. The Victoria Tower, at the other or south end of the building. 5th. The central tower, designed for the purposes of ventilation. And lastly, the quadrangular space enclosed by the exterior structure just described, containing the Houses of Lords and Commons. The works already executed, and now in progress, have been divided into five contracts. The 1st, the formation of the cofferdam and of the artificial embankment, extending along the river front. 2. The foundation of the river front of the building; both of which were let by tender to the Messrs. Lee, and have been long since completed. 3. The erection of the river front. 4. The foundations of the Houses of Lords and Commons, and other buildings in the quadrangle. And 5, the erection of those buildings; all of which were let to Messrs. Grissell and Peto, by whom the 4th has been completed, whilst the 3rd and 5th are in active progress. The river front has been carried up to its full height, and the greater part of the roof is completed. The exterior of this portion of the building presents a rich display of graceful mouldings, tracery, carvings, and decorations, with innumerable shields and heraldic devices, which, whilst they strike astonishment to the beholder, must raise in his heart a high admiration for native genius, which from the solid rock of massive limestone could, with an iron chisel and a wooden mallet, produce forms so beautiful and so intricate. The Victoria, clock, and central towers have each been carried to the height of about 33 feet, and have yet to be built considerably higher. These towers are equally rich in decorations with the river front, and are now being proceeded with very rapidly. The western front, which is to correspond with the river front, has not yet been commenced. Within the quadrangle, the exterior walls of the House of Lords have been built to their full height, and the roofing is nearly completed; the whole being expected to be covered in in the course of a few weeks, whilst very little progress above the surface of the ground has yet been made with the lower house.

It is hardly necessary to mention that the whole of the stone employed for the exterior work belongs to the magnesian limestone formation. For the interior work several varieties of the native oolite were originally employed, more especially that from Painswick, in Gloucestershire; these, however, have been now entirely superseded by a remarkably fine description of oolite imported into this country from Caen, in Normandy. This French stone has for centuries enjoyed a very high reputation for the fineness of its texture, the beauty and smoothness of its surface, and the ease with which, under the chisels and graving tools of the mason, it can be fashioned into the most intricate forms; it was the favourite stone of the priest-architects, who reared most

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